THE LITHOGRAPHS OF SARGENT

BY

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Mr. Belleroche, of Rustington, Sussex, an artist of British birth and nationality, who formerly lived much in Paris, is himself, as our readers may be aware, one of the best living masters of the art of lithography. Though it was evidently Frederick Goulding who first induced Mr. Sargent to use the lithographic crayon, no one was more closely associated than Mr. Belleroche with the few later experiments made by the great portrait painter in this medium, and no one can speak with more authority about their history. I have had some difficulty in overriding the objections raised by his modesty to this act of authorship, and in obtaining his permission to reproduce as frontispiece to the article an interesting sketch by himself of Sargent in his early Paris days, drawn in 1883. It

is appropriate to the reminiscences of those days which Mr. Belleroche has been good enough to add to the story of the lithographs themselves. For permission to reproduce these we are indebted to the artist's sisters, Miss Sargent and Mrs. Ormond. For the benefit of readers I may refer to another very interesting article on Sargent in early days, written by Mr. Hamilton Minchin in The Contemporary Review, June 1925.

The Editor.

The lithographs of John Sargent are so scarce that, despite his great reputation, they are only known to a few artists and must certainly be quite unknown to the average public.

I have no doubt that when Sargent worked for the first time with the intention of doing a lithograph, it was only after he had been persuaded to do so by one of his friends. He would do it then with his habitual good humour, and after having asked a few questions,

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he would set to work on a medium unknown to him and full of surprises and imprévu. Yet in spite of the difficulty he would find in using a greasy and sticky black chalk, it is astonishing to find in these lithographs the boldness and sureness of touch which is so characteristic in Sargent's drawings and places him at the very top of the draughtsmen of his time.

It was some time in the year 1882, at an annual dinner offered to Carolus Duran by his pupils, that I met Sargent for the first time. I had only been a few days at Carolus Duran's studio, and I hardly knew any of the students, but I had been told Sargent would be there, and Paris was full at the time of his successes at the Salon. He had just been awarded a second class medal with his El Jaleo and La Jeune Fille à la Rose, this being the highest distinction given a foreigner at the Salon.

Some time after a friend took me to dinner

at the Restaurant l'Avenue. Here I found Sargent sketching in a large album and surrounded by artists. I believe Helleu was posing for Sargent that evening. After the sitting was over and everyone had admired Sargent's portrait of Helleu, the album was brought back by the waiter of the establishment to Mademoiselle Fannie, the cashier who was the lucky possessor of this album. I soon discovered that this sketch-book was full of portraits, fragments of hands, etc., by various artists, but was in reality called "l'album Sargent," for the drawings were mostly done by him. One will easily understand that this little café had a great attraction for me, and therefore will not be surprised that the week after I found myself in the midst of the little group, and also saw one or two portraits of myself by Sargent in Mlle. Fannie's album. I soon became very friendly with Sargent and Helleu, and one day when we were dining together, Sargent

suddenly proposed that we should all go to Haarlem to see the Frans Hals together, and by so doing avoid the 14th of July in Paris. This little trip lasted three days, and we came back enchanted.

Sargent soon after left his studio at Notre Dame des Champs and took another at Bd. Berthier, where he finished the portrait of Madame Gautreau. Amongst the other pictures which Sargent painted in this new studio I will mention a three-quarter life-size portrait of a young man in a Florentine costume. This picture which was originally intended to represent an Italian gentleman holding a large double-handed sword, was finally cut down to the bust and the theatrical accoutrements removed. Sargent considered this portrait one of his best studies, for he had it photographed with the intention of allowing it to appear in Mrs. Meynell's work. With the exception of the portrait of Madame Gautreau, I do not believe that

Sargent ever had so many sittings as for this portrait.

He did not stay long in this new studio for the much discussed portrait of Madame Gautreau seemed to have caused some uneasiness in the mind of Carolus Duran, and the growing fame of his former pupil gave him cause for some anxiety. Sargent was aware of this, and no doubt it influenced him in his resolution to come to England. When I went to see my mother in London, I never failed to go and see him.

He was always very affable to me and he would ask me to make use of his studio. On one of these occasions I showed him some lithographs I had done, and he seemed interested, especially in the dark proofs. He told me that he had done one or two lithographs, and he showed me a draped study of a man seated (Pl. 1), and as I seemed struck by the fine velvety black, he said, "You can have it if you like." He showed me another

lithograph of the same model (Pl. 2). These two lithographs, with the portrait of Professor William Rothenstein, which he showed me a little time after (Pl. 3), were the only lithographs of Sargent I had seen.

I was at the time thinking, with one or two artists, of forming a society on the same lines as the Société des Peintres-Lithographes in France, and we had one or two meetings at a friend's studio in King's Road. I immediately thought how Sargent's name would be a help to us in our efforts to revive an interest in lithography. From that time I did everything in my power to induce him to take to this art and, strange to say, it was partly my fault that Sargent did not leave behind him the most interesting collection of lithographic drawings that had ever been produced. I had taken a small house for the summer in the Forest of Villiers-Cotterets. One day I received a letter from Sargent asking me if I would

go with him to Palestine as his guest. We should travel partly on horseback and sleep in tents. He also wrote that, in case I should have any scruples, he would ask me to paint him a picture. I was delighted, and immediately ordered a quantity of paints, chalks, lithographic papers, etc., in readiness for this expedition, and I thought to myself how our friendship would increase by this long journey. However, I did not cherish these thoughts long, for I soon realised that a journey like this with Sargent might influence me in my art and affect my individual expression, and however tempting it was I could not decide to go. I wrote to Sargent that I was sorry but I could not come, for I was finishing a picture which I intended to send to the Salon d'Automne.

When we met again, about three months later, he told me it was a pity I had not gone with him and he showed me all the interesting pictures and sketches he had

brought back. One day when I went to see him at Tite Street, I asked him if he would do my portrait in lithography. This portrait would very likely be reproduced in the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts," with an article on myself by Roger Marx. "Why not let me do a charcoal?" he said. "I have been doing several lately." I told him that I knew it and that I had just seen a very fine one of Princess Paul Troubetzkoi in Paris, but that I should prefer a lithograph. As I had no lithographic paper with me, I bought a few sheets of stout drawing paper slightly sized, and had these prepared with the composition which is generally used for "Scotch" transfer paper. I had used this paper on several occasions, but there was a drawback to it, as it was not intended for drawing. It was usually folded while wet and hung on racks, the consequence being that a large crease was made across the middle of the paper. However, I gave special instructions that

the sheets should be hung by means of two pegs and dried in the same manner. It was on this paper that Sargent made his lithograph (Pl. 4). Soon after I sent him some proofs when I was in Paris. He seemed very pleased with them, for he immediately asked me for some more, and wrote: "Why do you not come and live in England, I would do lots of these?" I sent him twelve more proofs on a yellow paper. As far as I can remember there should be about twenty-five impressions of this lithograph. A little time after we arranged to do a lithograph together with a well-known model who had sat for Sargent before for his large decorations (Pl. 6). I printed only two of this lithograph of his and sent him a proof on stout pink paper. I also printed another lithograph of Sargent's, a three-quarter head (Pl. 6), and I do not recollect having sent him a copy of this one; if so, there are only two in existence. Sargent's lithographic drawings are differ-

ent from other lithographs, and I think this must be accounted for by his great knowledge of draughtsmanship, and also by his total ignorance of the little tricky secrets which are so familiar to most lithographers; and yet in the Young Man Seated he obtains some light by simply reserving the white of the paper without trace of scraping and in looking at this lithograph one cannot help thinking of his fine water-colours. The study of a female head, slightly larger than life-size, shows a sculptural and decorative conception obtained with a few strokes in which he shows his wonderful science of draughtsmanship.

I regret that these lithographs of Sargent were done on transfer paper and not direct on the stone, for a drawing on paper cannot have the same brightness and delicacy of tone as one made on a stone. The dark lines generally get darker and the faint lines have a tendency to disappear.

Although Sargent spent most of his life in England, It does not appear that he was at any time influenced by the English school, whereas British artists have derived much from Sargent's long stay amongst them. If he had no pupils, he has had many imitators, and yet none of these would claim him as their master. Most of these artists, I am sorry to say, were only fascinated by Sargent's great skill, and they did not realise for one moment that Sargent's boldness and his masterly brush strokes were only the outcome of a great gift— I may say unique to him—of a wonderful rapidity of vision by which he could throw his work on the canvas in a very short time, which enabled him to finish his work quickly without losing the freshness of his first impression. Sargent was a good friend to those he liked and his coming to England at the right time has certainly hastened the celebrity of a younger generation of artists who had not

yet seen their way to be hung at the Academy.

When I went to see him, he would ask me news about Paris and would take me to his next-door neighbour after having told me that Wilson Steer's pictures were very pretty in colour, or he would drag me in a hansom to King's Road to see an exhibition of Augustus John's drawings. Or again, he would say, "Do you know Will Rothenstein? He has studied in Paris. I promised to go and see him; he wants to show me some prints. Come and see him with me."

With the exception of Helleu, who remained Sargent's best friend to the end, Paris had no great attraction for him. He used to pass through when he was going south, and I believe the longest stay he made in Paris since he left it, was when he painted a portrait of Mr. Read in my studio; this was, I believe, in 1891.

Sargent has left behind many friends and admirers in England, and I have no doubt

that every little detail of his life in the country of his adoption will be noted in the book which I understand will soon be published, but friends of Sargent's early period are now few, and therefore I am glad of the opportunity to trace back a page of his early days in Paris and to relate a few reminiscences of a personal friendship with Sargent when, although in full possession of his genius, he was still a modest admirer of Carolus Duran, and unaware of the fame that awaited him in England.

CATALOGUE OF THE LITHOGRAPHS OF J. S. SARGENT, R.A.

By CAMPBELL DODGSON.

Only six lithographs by Sargent are known to exist; all were drawn on transfer paper, and not direct on the stone. A proof of every lithograph is in the British Museum owing to the generosity of Mr. Belleroche and three other donors.

All the subjects being reproduced as illustrations to Mr. Belleroche's article, no description is required. The dimensions, where there is no border line, are those of the extreme limits of the drawing.

1. —STUDY OF A YOUNG MAN (SEATED). 1895. Signed in upper left corner J. S. Sargent, followed, apparently, by an illegible date, presumably 1895. 11⅝X8⅝.

Drawn at the instigation of Frederick Goulding, and included, under the title "Study," in a collection of lithographs by numerous painters, most of whom had never tried lithography before, which was arranged by Goulding in Paris in the autumn of 1905 and afterwards at Mr. Robert Dunthorne's gallery in November of that year. The history of that enterprise is related in Mr. Martin Hardie's "Frederick Goulding" (1910), chapter VI. This is the only lithograph by Sargent, except No. 4, of which any considerable edition was printed.

2. —STUDY OF A YOUNG MAN (DRAWING). 1895. Signed near upper left corner John S. Sargent. 11⅛X17⅜.
Evidently drawn on the same occasion as No. 1.

3. —WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN. 1897.
Not signed. 19X15.

Professor Rothenstein wrote to me on August 31st, 1925:

"Sargent made his lithograph of myself in 1897. I don't think there were more than six or eight printed, but I may be wrong. I had three copies, one of which is signed and dedicated; one I gave to my father, which my brother Albert now possesses; [and one to the British Museum.—C. D.] Sargent, I remember, gave a copy to Helleu, who liked the drawing. It was made in my old studio in Chelsea."

4. —ALBERT BELLEROCHE. 1905.
Inscribed "To my friend Albert Belleroche. John S. Sargent. 1905."
20⅝X15½.

Two states. I.—With additional crayon strokes at the foot, to left and right, outside the limits of the drawing. II.—The additional strokes effaced. About twenty-five impressions
(see page 39).

5. —ALBERT BELLEROCHE (HEAD ONLY).
Not signed. 9X6¼. Only two impressions.

6. —HEAD OF A YOUNG WOMAN.
Not signed. 22¼X15. Only two impressions.

Drawn from Miss Beatrice Stewart, a model who sat in Chelsea for Mr. Augustus John, A.R.A., as well as Sargent.